

This was the final project for the Ethnomusicology 20C (Musical Cultures of the World: Asia) course, taught by Professor Katherine In-Young Lee in Fall 2021 at UCLA. Students worked in groups to research and conduct an oral history with one of seven Asian and Asian American musicians. Each of the narrators are highly esteemed musicians with long professional careers in music performance. They also serve as important liaisons between their home countries in East, South, and Southeast Asia and the United States.

Profile of Gao Hong

Gao Hong, Chinese pipa player and composer, began her career as a professional musician at age 12. She graduated from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing where she studied with pipa master Lin Shicheng. She has received numerous awards and honors, including First Prize in the Hebei Professional Young Music Performers Competition, a Beijing Art Cup, an Asian Pacific Award, and grants and fellowships from the Minnesota State Arts Board, Meet the Composer and the Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council.

As a composer, Gao has received commissions from the American Composers Forum, Walker Art Center, the Jerome Foundation, Zeitgeist, Ragamala Dance Theater, Minneapolis Guitar Quartet, Theater Mu, IFTPA, and Twin Cities Public Television. Her composition for solo pipa, “Flying Dragon”, won the 2012 Global Music Award - Award of Excellence Solo Instrumental (Gold Medal).

In January 1997, Gao became the first Chinese musician to be awarded an Artist Assistance Fellowship from the Minnesota State Arts Board. The same year she was also awarded a McKnight Artist Fellowship for Performing Musicians, a Jerome Foundation Travel and Study Grant, and an Asian-Pacific Award. In 1998, she was Included in Peoples' Publishing's Dictionary of Chinese Musicians. In 2000, she was awarded A LIN (Leadership Initiatives in Neighborhoods) Grant from The St. Paul Companies and performed and composed music for play Song of the Pipa, a Theater Mu production based on Gao Hong's own life story and the life of Bai Juyi. In 2019 she was awarded a fifth McKnight Artist Fellowship for Performing Musicians, becoming the first musician in any genre to win the award five times. In 2005, she was the first traditional musician awarded the distinguished Bush Artist Fellowship for Traditional and Folk Arts. In 2018 she became the first Chinese musician to win a Sally Award from the Ordway Center for Performing Arts. While in China, Gao was awarded First Prize in the 1984 Hebei Professional Young Music Performers Competition and a 1989 International Art Cup in Beijing.

Oral History Interview Transcript - Gao Hong

Liv Berg [00:01:02] Hi, this is Liv Berg, Remy Sher, and Yerry Wright. Today is November 30th, 2021, and we are interviewing for the first time Professor Gao Hong. This interview is taking place on Zoom in both UCLA in Los Angeles, California, and Bemidji State University in Minnesota. This interview is sponsored by UCLA and is part of the oral history project in Professor Katherine Lee's Music of Asia course. Okay, so thank you so much for being here.

Professor Gao Hong, I'm just going to start by asking if you can give us an introduction into your life and how you were introduced to the pipa.

Gao Hong [00:01:50] OK. Nice to see you, everyone. I'm in Bemidji State University, but I'm not teaching at Bemidji State University. I'm just visiting for a couple of days for residency, for a solo council and the lectures I'm in and teach at the Carleton College. So, I started to play the Chinese pipa when I was eight. My mom was a music teacher and she was worried about it. I had to go to the countryside, to go to the farm, and she forced me to learn an instrument so I could avoid going to the countryside. So at age eight, my mom was a music teacher, of course. So my first instrument, actually, the accordion. You probably wouldn't believe because during that time Russia was our Big Brother. So my first instrument was an accordion. Then I was too skinny, too small. I couldn't play very well. So my mom said, OK, let's switch to something. So I switched to yueqin, which means short neck of a lute. You can see in the Peking Opera Company, it's kind of like a lute. So is at that time, it's only two strings. And I was very quickly, very quickly become very familiar with [it]. So only in a few months I was on the radio. My mom said, Oh, it's too easy. Let's add other strings. So my second Chinese instrument was a liuqin. It's kind of like a mandolin, a small pipa. It's three strings again, too easy. So my mom said, OK, let's do a zither with me – zheng. Now we call it guzheng. Kind of like a Japanese koto, you know, that's kind of the zither. That was at that time was only 16 strings, then later 18 strings. Now it's 21. Sometimes we'll have 24 strings. So because Henan province where I was born has a lot of zheng masters and that time too many people learned. So my mom say in order...In order means, in order for me to take a job, to get auditions, to get a good job and has to be some instrument, very difficult. So then she decided to let me learn the pipa. So the pipa and then before that, I learned violin, erhu, Chinese two string fiddle and a lot of other stuff until the pipa. So that's how I introduce the pipa. It's not a fairy tale. Say, Hey, I love the pipa. No, it's totally by my mom's choice.

Liv [00:04:57] And was your mom a pipa player? Because you said she was a music teacher? So what kind of teacher was she-

Gao Hong [00:05:04] Actually, she didn't know how to play any instrument except the organ. And she was an opera singer and was a music teacher. So she actually looked at the book and taught me because I didn't have a teacher. But I also didn't have a score. So I will listen to the LP. You listen. Then I would just repeat, I say good. That really helped me my future improvisation because I can easily pick [out what] the people play. I think that's part of the reason I I'm comfortable with listening to other people play.

Liv [00:05:59] Very interesting.

Yerry Wright [00:06:01] You also said before that, like it wasn't like some magical fairy tale that your mom kind of just made you pick up an instrument. So like, did you grow? I mean, obviously now I guess you did. But how did you grow to like, love the pipa?

Gao Hong [00:06:13] Oh my gosh, it is hard because at the age of about four years... At the age of 12, I became a professional musician and I went to the neighbor province of Hubei. I was born in Luoyang, Henan province. So after I became a professional musician, I I thought I had no any

other future except to play the pipa. So at that time, that forced me to love it. But I really never, never really said, Oh my gosh, pipa was so wonderful. I want to play forever. Actually, until today, I still say next to life. If I, if I have a chance, I may not take the pipa because it's so difficult. So it's really difficult. So eventually, grew your in your heart is kind of like a part of your body being part of your blood. Now, if you take away, I would be very, very mad because that's like a part of me. It will be gone. But in the other hand, it's so difficult, and my mom usually locked me from the outside of the house lock me from outside, so I couldn't get out at eight hours a day to practice my instrument. So it's really, really harsh. And so that's why even when I was very young, I would took off all my clothes only have thin clothes. I would stand being in the rain. So I could, you know, get sick. Then my mom will give me a half day off. So it's a really, really scary time. And I we didn't have a Christmas. But at that time, I had only wish if I never, never played that pipa will be my happiest day ever. That's how I grew up. But now, after almost 50 years, I am still playing the pipa. Like you said, it's growing. Like I said, it's like growing inside of me. And I started falling in love and especially after I graduated from Central Conservatory and then later I really is kind of realized how important it to, especially when you are in America. Not many people know how to play it. I was lucky enough to study with the most famous people, Master Lin Shicheng, the sixth generation of a Pudong style of pipa. So I kind of feel like it's my duty or I have to do it. So then I love teaching so much, that really helped me. Now I just really, really love it.

Liv [00:09:12] I love that. Um, I was wondering because you because your mom was also a musician. Was it common where you grew up and just in the culture to take on the same or a similar occupation to what your family did or what your parents did?

Gao Hong [00:09:29] Not really. And my mom just just wanted- my mom wasn't like a professional performer. She was a music teacher. My father was an artist. And also as a governor official, you know, it's kind of like that. And only thing is, at that time, only choice to avoid going to countryside is to get an audition and get accepted to the professional dance and singing troupe. Then you won't have to go to the countryside. But I think that's only my mom's motivation. Say get a job. That's it. Then I did at the age of 12.

Liv [00:10:16] Wow, OK, and then can you describe a bit of your education of the pipa and what your teacher and your relationship was like and the format of your learning?

Gao Hong [00:10:29] Yeah. Very beginning. Like I said, as my mom read a book and taught me how to play it. I listened to the LP, so I didn't have an official teacher until after... You know, I went to a seminar for CDs to find some teachers, but until I got to the dance and singing troupe, there was a player older than me and he'll say, Hey, let me tell you some piece. But it still wasn't official until I was lucky enough to get an audition to Hubei arts school. It's kind of like a pre-college. So that's the first time at age of 15, I finally have a real, real teacher. I mean, real teachers. So I started to study there for six years. And besides learning pipa and also you have to learn all of the harmony, you know, it's kind of a pre-college conservatory and also piano. And so after six years, I became a teacher. Pipa teacher in there. After one year, I was very fortunate, very, very honored and to get accepted at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. And it's very, very difficult. At the the time it was 1986 and in the entire whole China, only 2 pipa players were accepted. So it's really, really difficult. So my teacher actually personally registered

for me and paid the registration fee and wrote a letter to me saying, Please come here to audition. So other way, I wouldn't even dream of thinking of getting into Central Conservatory. I may think about other schools, but never thought the Central Conservatory would be my... You know, that was my dream, dream, dream school. Yeah.

Yerry [00:12:50] You sort of mentioned it earlier, but what eventually and when did you come to America? What brought you to America? And then when was that also in this timeline?

Gao Hong [00:12:59] Yeah, after the Central Conservatory four years, I graduated and I went to a Beijing dance scene troupe as a soloist and the first chair for the pipa. But one year, one year and a half, I went to Japan and that was in 1992, 1994. No, that was 1993, I went to Japan and had a tour. Then 1994, I came to America. That was 1994, I came to America.

Yerry [00:13:35] What brought you to America, like why did you come?

Gao Hong [00:13:39] Yeah, that was 1994 through the international, through international - OK, let me see. International performing arts, I mean, international friendship through the performing arts. So this organization booked me for 10 cities tour, a performance at New York City, Pittsburgh - Pittsburgh University and Cleveland, Denver, Albany, and of course, St. Paul, Minneapolis and other 10 cities. So I had my first pipa solo tour in 1994.

Yerry [00:14:21] So your first experiences as a pipa player in America was as a performer, not as a teacher.

Gao Hong [00:14:32] No, no, that was totally, yeah, it was totally just a pure tour. So the reason I became a teacher was a very interesting story. I've been telling this story all the time. That was first tour in 1994. Not many people knew what pipa was yet. So I was performing at Denver at a museum. So the presenter at the radio announced it, said, "please come to see the Chinese woman play the pipa." So about five minutes later, somebody called, said "how could this Chinese woman play the peapod?" I think they thought I was playing the vegetable peapod! So then that was a big, big shock for me, said what. This Chinese instrument I've been playing for so many years, they thought I was playing the vegetable, so I was very, very shocked and then thinking, you know what? I maybe should stay in America to let more people know, so that's the time after tour. Then, of course, I married too, so that time I said, you know, I really think I should start with education. So that's 1994, after the first tour, I started a Chinese children's ensemble in Minneapolis. That's how I started teaching.

Yerry [00:16:04] Thank you for that.

Gao Hong [00:16:05] It is a funny story.

Remy [00:16:10] I think that actually leads really well to the question that I was going to ask, which is you're talking about that you toured in America and people were very unaware of the traditions. And we actually talk in our class a lot about performing traditional music in nontraditional settings and how that kind of translates. And we were just wondering what your opinions are on showing the pipa to the world and how you feel performing such a traditional

thing in such a nontraditional setting. And you mentioned, like the peapod story, how does that feel and how were you able to, I guess, overcome the challenges of doing that in this setting?

Gao Hong [00:17:01] Very good question. It's really, really challenging in the beginning. Like I said, people first thought, they are not - no one wants to come to see a pipa concert because they wouldn't think about it will be interesting or not, so it's very challenge. But for nontraditional setting, for me, I wanted to, since the peapod story - doesn't matter if I perform a small school, I mean small setting or I perform for symphony orchestra or big hall - I always introduce the pipa, what a pipa is. And then I would tell them about the story and talk about the music, the techniques - like the technique, the sounds of it - you know, like a horse trotting, flowing water, with all that kind of a sound effect. And or, I don't want the audience thought, oh, she made a mistake or she didn't know, you know, so I kind of, every time I will tell the story about that piece, what about it? And the what's the instrument as a special characteristic of the traditional what I call the traditional techniques, how to sound effect. So that's how I tried to do, because many, many times when I play the piece over thousands of years, we even don't know who wrote it. They will say, "oh, that must be modern music." I say no, actually, it's traditional music. It's for me, to take pipa, to kind of try to relate it to the people who haven't heard, like I would try to show them how guitar play, how pipa play. How America, I can play the Mozart on the pipa, I would show them how I play Mozart, and then also, I will play how the Chinese traditional. So let them to have an easy to connect. "Oh, that sounds like a banjo. Oh, this sounds like a guitar. Oh, this sounds like a mandolin." So I'm trying to introduce the people not familiar about Chinese traditional music. For my solo concert, the first half - like tomorrow I'm going to my solo concert - I all for the first half I will do a pure, pure, traditional pipa music. I don't change, I don't do anything, I just did exactly how my teacher taught many, many years because I wanted them to see exactly what Chinese music sounds like. Then the second half, I will do my own composition. Sometimes I will do looping, sometimes I do multimedia - I have two multi-media shows, one is called Gao Hong on the highway. It's related with my many, many [mishaps] of driving, because I will use looping, prerecorded looping, then I will put my true story as immigrants. How I, how living in America, the challenge life was or is. So then I have another one called Chinglish. Obviously, you can tell my English is not perfect. Since I'm here for 27 seven years, I still cannot speak perfect English, so I called Chinglish because I constantly speak Chinglish. But all my students just forgive me. And to tell the truth, I came here 27 years ago, I fell in love with my husband through a translator, and on our wedding we had two interpreters because we couldn't communicate. So now I, I still speak Chinglish. So what I do is I like to tell a story called Ancient Story: the pipa music story from ancient to modern. So that way I'm trying to connect with not just the people who are American Chinese, I want to connect to Americans, not just American Chinese, you know. Then also, I wanted to reach young people, like example Gao Hong on the highway is just comedy, just like really funny, and or Chinglish, to see how the immigrated people live when they first come in this country. So that's my approach to how to promote Chinese music. First of all, I try to introduce them the traditional, then give them something related, they can easily to rely on it. Then hopefully they will start to enjoy the music.

Remy [00:21:45] That's amazing.

Gao Hong [00:21:47] Thank you.

Liv [00:21:49] I have a question because you brought up your composition, Gao Hong on the highway. It was very, very funny. So I was wondering if you could talk more about - well, you kind of explain that a lot of the comedy came from your experience being in a new country and with figuring out how to navigate, so I wondering how comedy - like incorporating comedy in music is not a super common thing - so how did that come to you? And can you talk a little bit about what your experience was like composing that? Because it's very fun to watch.

Gao Hong [00:22:26] Did you watch it? You did. Oh, that's yeah, you're right. So I think - so here is the thing, because when they commissioned me to write a piece that they wanted something new. And I was constantly getting pulled over and I would say, you know, I am a positive person. I could be very negative and say, Oh my God, my life is so hard, you know, I can't - I couldn't speak Chinese, I'm pulled over by police. But you know, I, I'm very positive. I feel like a lot of people like me struggle for stay calm. You know, they don't know how to do it. But I kind of use this as a light side for telling immigrants people how hard for us to begin a new life in the new land. You know, that's how I - so when I started composing, I would say, you know, if I do a traditional way to compose, it doesn't fit in with this kind of like video story. So I say, you know, maybe I do a prerecorded looping. So that's the first time I ever did, I went to GarageBand looking for all the looping. And with all the loops, I put it together. So all the entire 30 minutes of music, besides what I play live, so I try to interact. One, looping is like modern life where I am in America. So I use all the looping modern technology, put all the kind of funny sounds. Me to play live is representing me as an immigrant in this society. So that's how I did it when I composed that.

Remy [00:24:20] I have a question about that. Do you encourage your students to kind of take the what they learn from the traditional music and kind of adapt it to their own, modern perception of it and looping and technology and stuff?

Gao Hong [00:24:38] Yes, absolutely. Because especially for cross-cultural, because besides directing a Chinese music ensemble and teaching one on one for all my Carleton students, I'm also directing a global music ensemble. So each term we'll pick two countries' music. So like this term, we'll do Japan - I usually do one east and one west - for example, this term we'll do Japan and Irish Music, and next term we'll do Indian music to native Indian. You know, that kind of stuff, I do that a lot because I think they have the passion for their own, too. So I sometimes say which country, which genre you like. So I will let them to play bluegrass, I will let them to play jazz and let them play pop. Just let them relate it. So I think the best way for them to love what they do or love what they learn is to like what they do - not like my mom forced me to do. So because of first hand, I learned that so hard, so now when I teach my students the first lesson I have to make them love what they do. I think love is the best teacher. If you love something, you will be definitely wanting to study more.

Yerry: [00:26:12} Would you say that (um), this like almost like modern approach to pipa playing is something that you've kind of, you know, done alone or is this something that's also practiced in China too? You know, with the, with the pipa playing.

Gao Hong: [00:26:28] Yeah so right now I think we have a few people who came here in 19-early 1990s, 1992, 1994. We have a few people love to discover something. Now I go back to

China because I'm also a guest professor at the Central Conservatory, China Conservatory, and Tianjin Conservatory. So everytime when I go back, I kind of give them a lot of a lecture how to do improvisation, how to collaborate with a different genre or other musicians. Right now, a lot of people in China right now are doing that. They're doing rock and roll pipa. Or they can make all the sounds. If you close your eyes, you almost hear almost like a electronic guitar, but I know that they're using pipa technique. That's not my approach; I don't want all my students to become [...] play the pipa on the guitar. I mean play the pipa sounds like a guitar. I don't want that because, for example, if I were to collaborate with a jazz musician, if I play exactly like a jazz guitar, I don't think anyone want me because I will never be better than the jazz guitarist. The reason they want me is because I have a fresh air from a Chinese flavor. So when I improvise improvise I always do trying to do take theirs and then bring mine in. So like, kind of like a study - the Arabic maqam or, you know, the blues how they do it (what's the progression?). Then I will add my Chinese five pentatonic scale or some level I will make the butterfly melody very kind of like a Chinese flavor because I wanted them to know "Hey, I'm Gao Hong. I'm a Chinese pipa player; I don't want to lose my identity." So that's my approach. But I don't - also I don't want to "You're on the same stage - you play yours, I play mine." That's not a collaboration; that's called play yourself on the same stage. That's- I don't like either. So I really wanted to - is to collaborate it; you take from them, they take from yours, and then you mix together. I always say we're not [uh...] - an example with Syrian musicians. I will say we're not Syrian music, we're not Arabic music, we're not Chinese, we're new music. We're new world music. It's called the new world music. So it's not "we're playing Arabic music, we're playing Chinese traditional." So that's my approach.

Liv: [00:29:21] It seems like you have this interesting perspective and approach largely because you were like kind of self-taught in the pipa. And I was wondering if, from the start, were you composing and improvising? Just because it was just you on your own. Or no?

Gao Hong: [00:29:41] No, never. Never in a million years think that I would be composing; I never thought I would be doing improvise. And because in Chinese traditional way, I only do it because I listen to the recordings to pick up what they play. And I - let me tell you a very funny story that's a true story. It was a very early - 1996 or 1997 - and I couldn't speak a word. You know, I couldn't speak, I never picked up phone. Suddenly somebody called left message and I couldn't understand. My husband came back and said, "Oh! There is a jazz musician just came from New York - really wanted to perform with you." It's the American Composer Forum put this music concert at the Walker Arts Center. Don't know if you know Walker Arts Center is one of the modern music, very famous, venue. I say, "Oh, jazz! What jazz is? I'm modern Chinese, traditional musician; I don't know how to play jazz." So my husband convinced me, he say, "Ok, let's just try it because they're really good." So I went there. I went there they did - first they did a soundcheck at six o'clock. I was... Wow! I couldn't believe how incredible - I just got here, I couldn't believe the bass guitar can play like that. I was just totally in shock. And then they saw me play; they couldn't believe either! They were kind of like "Oh, what's going on?!" So they were kind of like - So them the first half they play pure jazz and second half, I play pure Chinese music. So I just trying to get off, suddenly all three people came. Actually, three people very famous - one's called Anthony Cox, who is a jazz bass player on the jazz [...] of the dictionary, one is called David King (I don't know if anybody know; he was on the cover for the drum on the Rolling Stone on the cover a few years - his group called the Bad- the Bad Plus, I don't know

if you- you guys ever heard), but anyways then other one [was] guitarist. So... then they came back [on stage], I said “What?” They said, “We need to play together.” I said, “What do we play?” “Play whatever you want.” At that time, I had no idea what’s improvise. I said, “What? What do we play?” So finally I said, “Which key are we playing?” Then they said, “What do you think?” I said D! Actually D Major and B minor - the relative. But this started with the D - D minor and F major. Suddenly we crashed the first note - “Wha-, what’s that note?” Then suddenly we all quickly adjusted. Then, we start playing and I just play whatever they do, because it’s just play whatever you want. So that’s the first time I ever really improvise. Suddenly, everybody stopped except David (the drummer). I knew that’s my solo; I said, “If I don’t play, there’s no melody - what do I do?” So I finally realized I have to play something. So I just- I just played a some- from, by my ear. Whatever they did, I just kind of made up on my pipa. Then everybody stood up and, at that time, not many people even knew what pipa was. So everybody stood up and one person even said they thought it was earthquake - because they couldn’t understand how the Chinese pipa [worked]. So my husband is like, “I didn’t know you know how- you know how to play blues.” I said, “What blues?” So I didn’t know. So it was because that I really fall in love with improvise and also I fall in love with playing with different artists. So that’s my true story on how I became [proficient in] improvise.

Remy Sher: [00:33:39] So your very first time improvising like that was onstage on the spot?

Gao Hong: [00:33:44] Yes. And then I even didn’t know what it was. [Laughs]

Remy: [00:33:48] That’s amazing.

Gao Hong: [00:33:51] That was a funny story, right?

Yerry: [00:33:59] You, what’s it called, I know it kind of seems that you’re largely influenced by jazz too; are there any other genres that like influence your pipa playing now? That you’ve kind of picked up things from or like gleaned from?

Gao Hong: [00:34:12] Yeah, Arabic. I love Arabic music since right now I play with an oud player. And I love Indian music. And I also love - I love everything - blues! Because sometimes I play some Chinese folk tune and they think I play blues. And I love bluegrass, and I love- I even love Irish music. Can you believe? And the klezmer! I play with the klezmer violinist. And I play everything; I also play with the new music too. I compose my own music too. Yeah.

Remy: [00:34:52] You mentioned blues and I was wondering- in the past ten weeks we’ve seen a lot of traditional music from Asia and a lot of it had a lot of similarities to American folk and blues. And I was wondering if you found- if you realized how similar they were after once you came to America or you see like-

Gao Hong: [00:35:14] Yeah, I didn’t. Yeah that’s why I didn’t know my first improvisation, I didn’t know what the blues was, but they think I was able to play blues. I think there was kind of like a melodic minor in the blues and it’s kind of like a Chinese folk tune. Like especially the minority music in China, a lot of- kind of like that. And also, also the blues is very, very easy to connect it or- I don’t know why, it’s just so easy to pick up the melody. I think the melody is very easy for us to do. And right now in China, a lot of young people love blues. You wouldn’t believe! Like- like some people play on their instrument play the blues too. Yeah.

Remy: [00:36:04] So do you think the traditions are just like naturally similar because of human nature and how we're able to connect to that sound of music?

Gao Hong: [00:36:14] Yes, I think that right now, I think it is. A lot of the time, even some native- I mean native American music. Even some like Japanese music, Korean music, you know we all influence each other. So, for me, the big big difference is when I play with Arabic music. They have quarter- quarter tones, and we don't because we have frets. It's impossible for us to do - especially the pipa player. But I will adjust my left hand, pull a little higher than the normal to match that. So that's very challenging. But it doesn't matter we play which maqam or which mode; we still- our feelings still connect easily. That's because we always say we all human beings. And we all- even when we cry, we all cry the same way. Even I don't know what do you say, but I know you are crying, I know you are sad. So if I see you happy, jump joy, I know that too; it doesn't matter, I know you speak which language. So I think the music is same thing. When you're excited, your music is excited - it'll touch your heart. When you're sad, your music is feel emotional too. So that's why, I think- for me, a lot of people always say, "You play a lot of different music, how you connect it?" I say, "For me, it's from heart." I just say, "Whatever I do, if I pour my heart there, then we'll connect." So like we're making friend. If I treated you from my heart - honestly just love what you do, what you- respect each other, then yes. We all have a heart, right? And we're connected that way and our music sounds great. That's what I do.

Remy: [00:38:15] That was very inspiring. Like I feel so inspired off of all that you've just been saying.

Gao Hong: [00:38:22] Thank you, thank you.

Liv: [00:38:25] Thank you so much. I think we have one more question to kind of wrap it up. So you're so accomplished and, not just as a musician, it seems like as a person too. And then we were wondering what award or experience, I know it's hard to choose, but what has made you feel- like what has been the greatest honor for you or do you think has made the biggest impact?

Gao Hong: [00:38:51] I think the Bush Foundation. The Bush Fellowship. That's the- I was the first traditional artist ever got the Bush Fellowship. And the meaning is- then they send me back to study more with my teacher after I came to America. So I kind of used that money - this big chunk of money, so much money (I think it 45,000 award). So I went back to China study a few piece never taught yet and some other piece called "Mother do not argue with Daughter" that last over hundred years. So I used that to study to see if they want to record it on CD. And also I went to some Chinese minority places. I did field work to Guangxi; a lot of it was minority music. So then I started doing that, then I came back, composed for choir, composed for guitar quarter. And I think that- that was my favorite thing to do. Of course I have others, but I think that was very meaningful for me, before my teacher passed away.

Liv: [00:40:14] Well thank you so much for letting us interview you. This was really wonderful.

Gao Hong: [00:40:20] Thank you.